
The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin (PSC) prepared this brochure to let you know your rights as a water customer. It includes answers to your most common questions and concerns. If you have a question or problem with your service, first contact your utility. If your utility cannot resolve the problem, call the PSC.

What is on Your Bill

All water utility bills must include:

1. Account number.
2. Billing address.
3. Service address (if not the same as the billing address).
4. Current meter reading and date.
5. Prior meter reading and date.
6. Number of units consumed.
7. Minimum and estimated bills shall be distinctly marked as such.
8. The date on which the utility bill is due.
9. The rate schedule under which the bill was computed.
10. Clear itemization of the amount of the bill for the present billing period, any unpaid balance, and any late payment charges.
11. Clear itemization of other utility charges and credits.

If the rate schedule is not included with the bill, the utility must provide a copy of the rate schedule to all customers whenever a rate change becomes effective *and* at least once each year.

Late Payment Charges

A utility can add a late payment charge if your bill has not been received by the utility by the due date printed on your bill.

A late payment charge can be:

1. A one-time charge of 3% of the unpaid bill (minimum of 50 cents), *or*
2. A monthly charge of up to 1% of the unpaid bill (including unpaid late payment charges).

A Deposit May Be Required

If you are a new residential customer, you may be asked to post a deposit if you did not pay an undisputed bill for gas, electric, or water service anywhere in Wisconsin during the last six years *and* your income is above 200 % of federal income poverty guidelines.

If you are a current residential customer, you may be asked to post a deposit if:

- a. Your service has been disconnected within the last 12 months.
- b. You falsified a service application.

Installment Plans for Overdue Bills

You may enter into an installment plan to pay what you owe your utility. This helps you pay your current bills and any overdue bills. You will be asked to make a “reasonable down payment” and “reasonable installments.”

A reasonable amount is based on:

1. The size of your overdue bill.
2. Your payment history.
3. How long your bill has been overdue.
4. Reasons your bill is overdue.
5. Other important factors such as household size, income, and necessary expenses.

Your utility may ask you to sign an installment agreement. Do not sign it unless you agree to the terms. You have the right to suggest a different payment agreement.

If you do not pay installments as agreed, the utility may disconnect your service. If you do not pay, the utility does not have to negotiate a new agreement before it disconnects your service. It is up to you to let the utility know if there have been any significant changes in your ability to pay.

If you and the utility cannot agree on an installment plan, you can file a dispute with the PSC. While the PSC investigates and attempts to

resolve your dispute, your service should not be disconnected. However, you must pay all bills not in dispute.

Service Disconnections

A utility must either mail or personally deliver a notice before your service is disconnected.

This notice must include:

1. Date of notice.
2. Date when service can be disconnected.
3. Reason for the disconnection.
4. If feasible, the occupants may apply to the utility to accept responsibility for future bills and avoid disconnection of service.
5. How to contact the utility about the notice.

The notice must be mailed to your home or mailing address at least 10 days before the disconnection. If the billing address is different from the service address, notice shall be posted at the service address at least five days before disconnection. The utility is required to make a reasonable effort to contact you by telephone or in person before service is disconnected.

If service is not disconnected within 20 days after the notice is mailed, the utility must leave a new notice at the site not less than 24 hours or more than 48 hours prior to disconnection.

A utility may disconnect utility service without notice where a dangerous condition exists for as long as it exists.

Service may be disconnected with a written 24-hour notice for non-payment of a bill covering theft of water.

Your service **cannot** be disconnected if:

1. You fail to pay for merchandise or non-utility service.
2. You fail to pay for a different type or class of utility service.

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3. There is a declared heat advisory, warning, or emergency for your area.

Your service **can** be disconnected if:

1. You fail to pay your bills, including delinquent bills from a previous address.
2. You fail to pay your installment plan as agreed.
3. You fail to pay required deposits.
4. You tamper with your meter.
5. There is a safety hazard.
6. You refuse or fail to allow the utility to obtain a meter reading at least once every four months where the utility bills monthly or bimonthly, or at least once every nine months where the utility bills quarterly.

Medical Problems

The utility may delay disconnection for up to 21 days if there is a medical emergency in the home. During this delay, you must work with the utility to make payment arrangements in order to continue the service on a permanent basis. The utility may require a letter regarding the medical emergency from your doctor, a public health official, a social service official, the police, or sheriff. The letter must specify the medical emergency, the need for water, and the expected duration of the emergency. The utility may grant another 21-day extension if there is evidence that you are working with the utility to establish a payment plan.

Delinquent Bills Levied as a Tax

Delinquent municipal utility bills may be levied as a tax as provided in Wis. Stat. § 66.0809(3).

Have a Dispute?

First contact your utility to try to resolve the problem. If you are behind on your bill, the utility may offer you an installment plan to pay the amount owing.

If the utility cannot resolve your problem, you may contact the PSC at 1-800-225-7729 or (608) 266-2001. While the PSC reviews your dispute, your service should not be disconnected. However, you must still promptly pay any charges not in dispute. After the PSC completes its review, a staff member will contact you and the utility to discuss the resolution.

Bilingual Service – Servicio Bilingüe

The PSC is also able to provide customer assistance in Spanish. When calling the PSC, please ask to speak to a Spanish-speaking representative.

En la Comisión de Servicios Públicos del estado de Wisconsin (PSC) podemos asistirles en Español. Cuando llame a la PSC, pida habla con un representante de habla hispana.

The PSC does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the provisions of programs, services, or employment. If you are speech, hearing, or visually impaired and need assistance, call (608) 266-5481 or TTY (608) 267-1479. We will try to find another way to get the information to you in a usable form.

For More Information Contact:

Public Service Commission

610 N. Whitney Way
P.O. Box 7854
Madison, WI 53707-7854
608-266-5481
TTY: 608-267-1479
Fax: 608-266-3957
<http://psc.wi.gov>

3031B 10/11/04

Your Bill of Rights as a Residential Water Utility Customer



Public Service
Commission of
Wisconsin